



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

437th AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

102 East Hill Blvd., Rm. 223, Charleston AFB, S.C. 29404-5154
Phone: (843) 963-5608, 5588 or 5589 Fax (843) 963-5604

PAO email: edmund.memi@charleston.af.mil

After duty hours, call the base operator or
command post (963-2531) & ask for a PA rep

Release No. 08-05

Aug. 8, 2002

CAFB WING COMMANDER NAMES DROP ZONE IN HONOR OF LOCAL PATRIOT

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. – The new dual-row airdrop zone at North Auxiliary Airfield was recently named the Robert Hammond Drop Zone Aug. 1 in honor of the man who gave his time and talents to make major improvements at the field.

In a small, informal ceremony, Col. Brooks Bash, 437th Airlift Wing commander, officially named the drop zone as he presented Hammond with a certificate of appreciation.

Immediately following the presentation, Hammond looked on as a C-17 flew over, dropping four pallets to christen the newly-dedicated drop zone.

The origin of the project Hammond completed came about in spring of 2001, according to Maj. Brad Barnett, 437 AW Wing Plans chief and former “mayor” of North Field. Charleston AFB had a 100-acre area of trees cleared as an ongoing improvement to North Field. The clearing of the trees left the area full of stumps sticking out from the ground.

“If an aircraft would run off the runway, the stumps could cause extensive damage,” said Barnett. “Rolling onto dirt would definitely be a big improvement.” Hammond’s company is one of the few in the area that can remove an area of stumps that large, said Barnett.

Following Sept. 11, Barnett said Hammond asked if the base still wanted the stumps cleared.

“He offered to do the job gratuitously,” said Barnett. “He worked the project on the side all fall. It only took him about six months to finish.”

On his own time, and with his own fuel, Hammond used his company’s equipment to clear the area, according to Barnett. The removal of the stumps allowed for the lengthening and widening of the area, creating a dual-row drop zone that increases the number of pallets C-17s can drop at that area.

Barnett said Hammond took on the job for no other reason than he loves the United States, and he loves to help others.

“I feel like it’s the least I can do,” said Hammond. “There’s nothing like America.

-more-

If asked to fight for the country, I'd fight, but at 59, I don't think anyone is going to ask. Instead, this is my way to say 'thank you.'"

Hammond, who happened to be wearing a patriotic shirt, arrived for the dedication in his Ford Bronco with three flags flying from it. When asked if the flags were put on his vehicle after Sept. 11, Hammond gave a hearty "no."

"I've had those flags on my Bronco for about 10 years," Hammond said. "To me, it just looks like the rest of the country has finally caught up with me."

"I feel like the Lord Jesus gave us each a chance to find what we enjoy in life," he continued. "I get enjoyment by doing for others. Helping the military and the folks out there defending the country is satisfaction enough."

Hammond said he didn't expect the drop zone to be named after him, and he didn't want any kind of reward for his work, but he was extremely honored to have his name permanently given to an area used for military training.

Although the field still needs to be surveyed to affirm that it meets additional training requirements, Barnett said the improvements Hammond made go a long way in North Field's vision of remaining the premier C-17 training area on the East Coast.

"Just clearing those stumps got rid of two or three waivers for safety," said Barnett. "This is a big step in the ongoing project to carry out sustained, tactical work in low cloud cover."

(This story is public domain. You may use any part of it for your publication. For more information or interviews, contact Capt. Krista Carlos at 963-5589 or Capt. Linda Pepin at 963-5537)